

Chairwoman Lt. Governor Roberts called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

The Chair welcomes Chief David Smith, the new executive director of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, to the council for his first meeting.

The Chair explained that the format of the meeting would be different from previous meetings. There had been discussions with the Lt. Governor and the Adjutant General about using EMAC as a place to discuss major issues facing all facets of emergency management in the state, as well as creating a standard level of expertise among the major players in emergency management across the different fields represented at the EMAC table. The hope is that the standard level of expertise can be brought back by EMAC participants to their agencies, increasing the knowledge base across the state. The Lt. Governor encouraged anyone EMAC member or participant with an idea for a topic to bring the idea forward.

The chair recognized Major General Robert Bray to discuss the new format and the genesis of today's meeting. General Bray first welcomed Director Smith in his new role at RIEMA. As the Chief of Police in Narragansett, Director Smith was instrumental in pushing for an interoperable 800mhz communications system that is now the backbone of RIEMA's portable communications capability. General Bray discussed the fact that when many EMAC members think of

interoperability, they think of technology: whether one department's radios work with another department's or whether the fire department's computer software talks to the police department's. He stated the importance of moving the interoperability discussion from technology to command and control, creating a situation where emergency management functions in one jurisdiction work well with every other jurisdiction, especially between municipal EMA's and RIEMA. General Bray stated that the goal is to create an interoperable system of emergency management and preparedness that will lead to better situational awareness. The Department of Homeland Security will require the state to possess a mature and well-developed common operating picture system that is built on a strong system to obtain situational awareness.

General Bray introduced Col. Ed Johnson, Emergency Preparedness Liaison, USAF to discuss the importance of situational awareness and a common operating picture. Col. Johnson spoke of the team concept of emergency management, whereby different organizations are able to collaborate, communicate and cooperate. One of the important advances that allows accurate situational awareness and a common operating picture is the internet. Since the basic element of a common operating picture is shared information, the methods that allow for information sharing should be vetted and utilized to their fullest potential.

The chair encouraged discussion of the presentation by Col.

Johnson. Members of the council discussed the fact that everyone should always be striving for situational awareness. For many local EMA's, that means having relationships in the community. As far as common operating picture, while technology is an important factor, what is important is personal information sharing. It is up to people in individual agencies to understand and appreciate the need for a common operating picture and the necessary information sharing. Members also discussed the need for a system for information sharing that people actually use. Additionally, council members discussed the need for community members to respond to emergencies themselves, and not wait for government to figure out the problem.

directors should not need to re-renter that The chair asked the council what the barriers are to a real common operating picture? Council members discussed the fact that local information is determined and input to a system by local sensors. Those "street level sensors" are our local EMA directors and they need to be convinced that a common operating picture system has value to them. The local officials need to see what they get out of the system for them to be willing participants in the system. Council members also discussed the need to avoid the duplication of efforts, as anything that causes more work for the "street level people" will result in that work not getting done. One example is that fire departments keep up to date information entered on equipment status so there is a centralized database of where information is and can be deployed. The council discussed the fact that this problem

developed because of the rapid development and adoption of technologies that do not work with each other.

The council discussed the importance of daily situational awareness, even on a regional basis. There is currently no good definition about what important information that should be shared on a local level. the council discussed that at a basic level, important information includes anything that may degrade your ability to respond to something else. This could be an event that is requiring the use of resources, or a situation that renders resources unavailable. Resources could be defined as water supply or fire vehicles or even as communications. General Bray discussed the new national priority of situational awareness. As part of a federal program to increase state-level situational awareness, Rhode Island will be opening a 24-hour operations center.

Council members discussed the problem that local level officials often do not see information come back to them. If there is a situation that the state-level officials know about, local level officials in districts that could be affected are not always informed. General Bray stated that it is evolving process and that he hopes that through EMAC, questions like this can be answered. The council discussed the possible integration of the fusion center to share information. While the fusion center may work in some communities, it will not work in all, because of the difference of the EMA structures on the local level. General Bray discussed the fact that Rhode Island now

has access to a number of previously unavailable resources that can help our situational awareness, including federal and military level resources.

Director Smith discussed the use of regional planners inside RIEMA to encourage free-flow of information. Council members discussed the fact that hospitals have a capacity and resource deployment process that is constantly updated. The system provides awareness of resource availability. The system took a long time and a lot of work, but now it works well and provides accurate information.

Council members asked what the capability is for getting word out to the public, especially to people who can't listen to the radio? The council discussed that this is a project that is underway. There are systems like reverse 911 that get help the decision makers make their decisions faster and move to the implementation phase more quickly because they allow for quick information sharing. There are challenges to making this happen, but we are on the way.

The chair stated that the issues surrounding situational awareness and common operating picture will not be answered at this meeting. She suggested the creation of a working group to examine what steps need to be taken to create a functioning system for situational awareness and common operating picture. The working group should also examine the systems that are already in place and can be expanded. Director Smith volunteered to organize the working group.

The chair moved to new business and announced that the next

meeting would be July 8. At that meeting, the council will hear from the working groups of the Domestic Preparedness SubCommittee. That meeting will also be used to finalize the report to the Governor on the December 13, 2007 snowstorm. Director Smith announced that there are a number of upcoming events, including the National Guard Air Show, the Ironman Competition, July 4, LeapFest. Additionally, RIEMA will be hosting a hurricane conference.

The chair adjourned the meeting at 11:42am.